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ABSTRACT

There is much discussion of the shortage of qualified teachers and the need for teacher recruitment, but punishment strategies legislated in many states to motivate teachers to do the extraordinary are also publicized. There are positive approaches that can be used to motivate teachers, including improving facilities and classroom conditions, increasing funding, improving human relations programs, and providing recognition for teachers. It might be productive to compare the medical and legal professions to that of teaching in terms of status and accountability. The recruitment of teachers from universities is an essential first step in addressing the teacher shortage. Appropriate and considerate hiring practices should encourage interest on the part of qualified candidates, and applicants should present themselves as qualified and competent when they are interviewed. The results of teacher tests must be regarded with caution; scoring well on a test is not the same thing as teaching students. In addition, tests may have flaws that hide the abilities of good candidates. Many schools have, or should have, recruitment programs in which prospective teachers actually teach in the school as they are considered for employment. (SLD)

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Assessing Teacher Recruitment and the Public Schools

Marlow Ediger

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ASSESSING TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Many articles in educational journals and in the media emphasize the upcoming shortage of qualified teachers to fill classrooms to teach students. Thus, the number of teachers retiring and the number leaving the profession each year makes for feelings of threat in staffing school systems. Talk of special ways of recruiting teachers and the retention of classroom teachers receives much emphasis, and yet punishment strategies are usually legislated in different states to "motivate" teachers to do the extraordinary. Punishments usually consist of the following threats of possible legislation:

1. educational bankruptcy laws.
2. merit pay to reward teachers for demonstrated performance with higher test scores from students.
3. voucher systems whereby parents can send their children away from a failing school to one which is successful. Failing schools tend to be in the lower socioeconomic areas. They tend also to lack proper facilities and materials of instruction. Money received from the failing school would be used as a voucher to enroll the student in a successful school with high student achievement.
4. higher expectations and standards for students to meet with tie ins to tenure and higher pay.
5. closing the gaps in achievement between minorities and suburban students, between the poor and the rich, between the gifted/talented and the slower learners, as well as between special education and regular students (See Ediger, 2001, 22-26).

Positive Approaches in Motivating Teachers

Positive procedures for states, boards of education, and superintendents of schools to use in teacher motivation include the following:

1. eliminating/remodeling dilapidated school buildings. Leaky roofs, shabby appearances in buildings, and outdated facilities make for poor quality environments for teachers and students. There are severe cases of outworn and shabby buildings used as schools. To often money saving and scrimmaging has been the objective in these many districts rather than provide a quality education for students (See Education Week, September 13, 2000). In the later 1950s and early 1960s, the author was principal of a school with a very leaky roof. In different classrooms, there was the plink. plank, and plunk sounds from water coming in through the roof and into cans/buckets set up on the floor. One teacher even had students write poetry with onomatopoeia by using echoic sounding words from the disrupting splashing drops of water!

2. eliminating overcrowded classrooms. An effective student/teacher ratio should be in the offing, fair to both involved in the classroom setting.

3. providing up to date teaching materiels, including textbooks, computer technology, library books, and multi-media approaches in teaching.

4. providing proper classroom temperature readings to enhance student learning. The old steam pipes used in heating schools has long been outdated. They too made unusual noises to distract students from learning. The pipes made banging sounds with its expansions and contractions. Then too, leaks from these steam radiators made it necessary to wipe up water or place small metal containers under each leak to catch the leaking water.

5. avoiding rivalries among teachers, administrators, and support personnel. Good human relations is to be prized rather than playing favorites among school personnel and thus invite unhealthy competition.

6. increasing funding for the many necessities in schooling is an answer to the many problems of providing a quality environment for student learning. Former President Ronald Reagan, during his presidency 1991-1999, continually stressed, "We do not throw money at problems, and yet his rapidly increased funding for defense built up a modern system of materials and training for the military, second to none. Money does make a huge difference when improving <u>what is</u> to <u>what should be</u>.

7. providing recognition nights for teachers in that they are recognized for the many things which are done to educate children over the many years. The author is product of the public schools which he attended 1934-1942 and feels that many teachers then made extraordinary efforts to provide quality in educational experiences at a very low cost (See Ediger, 2000, 399-411).

8. modifying the heavy hand of state mandating testing and its effects. If one test and its results is to determine a student's entire future, then what happens in student achievement within daily lessons and units of study means little in the promoting of students. Perhaps, the portfolio philosophy and its implementation may soften the blows of state mandated testing. When tests are given, the results should provide assistance in terms of what teachers are to emphasize in future learnings for children.

9. making fair comparisons in the news media when contrasting the profession of teaching with that of other lines of work such as

a). the medical profession. Everyone has nightmares of what has happened to them as a result of having secured medical services and/or been in a hospital. Could doctors be held accountable for curing cancer ridden bodies? Might stiff sentences be provided if these kinds of patients die? Perhaps, many fewer cancer patients would then die.

This is and does sound irrational.

If the education of children is to be equalized in terms of achievement for all students, isn't that a more complex objective as compared to medical doctors being required to restore all patients to health? Equalizing achievement means the gaps between minorities with their lack of educational opportunities in their communities be similar to suburban students with their many resources, the mentally retarded being of the same/similar achievement as compared to the gifted/talented, among others.

b) A second profession to compare is the legal profession. The legal profession makes many major errors indeed. When viewing all the inmates from prisons being released due to DNA evidence, the question arises how many were innocent and executed due to not having DNA evidence available? The state of Illinois has halted all executions due to the discriminatory approaches used in determining who is to be executed. "Guilty " persons too frequently have had poor quality legal representation whereas the wealthy individual receiving the very best in legal services goes free after committing a crime

The author feels reasonable expectations need to be in the offing for all in society, not the absurd and the impossible.

10. enumerating the above nine items makes for goals to emphasize in taking care of weaknesses in education and in the societal arena. Diagnosis and remediation are key elements when thinking of making improvements. By making for positive environments in teaching situations should attract and retain quality teachers.

Actual Recruitment

In addition to making for quality learning environments for teachers, the actual recruitment of teachers from universities needs to be an important factor in securing responsible teachers who assist students to achieve individually as optimally as possible. Notices need to be made at teacher placement agencies within the university indicating need for and which qualifications are wanted in a teacher. The public school desiring the new teacher should not give evidence of being a collector of placement papers for one or more teaching positions, but rather the school is seeking quality teachers for teaching positions. Teachers to be employed are to be of a certain quality to meet selected needs within the school district. The receiver of the application(s) must have definite criteria in mind when assessing the applicants. Applicants should

1. possess good moral character and ethical characteristics.
2. be enthusiastic, showing interest in the teaching profession.
3. reveal strong knowledge of children and of teaching and learning.

4. have a good grade point average indicating acumen and intelligence to be used in decision making settings in school.

5. reveal quality recommendations from those doing the recommending.

The above five criteria are screening devices for the interviewer of the applicant for a teaching position. Beyond these criteria, the interviewer be it the school superintendent, the school principal, and/or the director of school personnel, needs to possess definite qualities for the interviewing procedure, including

1. having a genuine desire to meet qualified teachers to fill teaching positions.
2. being considerate and accepting of others.
3. taking adequate time to know and understand the interviewee.
4. desiring to employ high quality candidates for teaching students.
5. providing information to the interviewee of different facets of the local public school.
6. possessing the knowledge to answer the candidate's questions in a polite manner.
7. letting the candidate know in due time the decisions made in employment of the new teacher. The candidate for the new teaching position should not be left in the dark as to his/her status in depending upon hearing from the interviewer.
8. showing and discussing pictures of the school and neighborhood in which the prospective teacher is to be employed. A prospectus of the city in which the school is located should also be discussed.
9. informing the prospective teacher to call by telephone or to send e- mail/fax messages asking about more information about the school and teachers therein.
10. thanking the candidate for coming to the interview.

Most school systems have a very limited budget in order to truly search for qualified candidates for teaching. This is unfortunate since seeking and locating the better candidates takes money and time.

The prospective teacher needs to have the following when being interviewed:

1. a pleasant countenance to be used in the communication process.
2. use of proper stress, pitch, and juncture while speaking to the interviewer.
3. a portfolio showing personal written work for a course, a cassette of oral use of language such as in the giving of a report in a class, returned test results for a class, and a video containing

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information on committee work participation.

4. a diary of pre-teaching and student teaching experiences, highlighting that which provided the most guidance in terms of perceived usefulness.

5. a statement of beliefs pertaining to a philosophy of teaching and the psychology of learning to be used in teaching students.

6. answers to questions about how to group students for instruction in a classroom, how to develop lesson/unit plans for instruction, and how to use a multi-media approach in helping students to meet state mandated standards in the curriculum.

7. be able to take a position on an issue in teaching, such as the whole language versus phonics in reading instruction.

8. present a vision of what <u>should be</u> in education.

9. have a video-tape pertaining to segments of vital student teaching experiences. These may be analyzed by both the interviewer and the interviewee.

10. ask questions of the interviewer pertaining to relevant items about teaching in his/her school.

The interview needs to be a two way street of communication whereby the prospective teacher wishes to know as much as possible about the teaching position being considered. The interviewee desires to establish positive human relations when learning more about how the prospective teacher would fit into the new school setting. Mutual respect and care needs to be shown toward each other in the process. Both need to reflect upon what transpired during the interview. By reflecting, each person thinks about and assesses the self in terms of

1. developing increased proficiency in the interviewing process.
2. becoming more knowledgeable about teaching as a profession.
3. learning more about human behavior since interviewing involves culture and the human made environment.
4. modifying one's own thinking pertaining to what is vital in the role of the classroom teacher.
5. keeping abreast of recent trends in education.

By having quality interviews, prospective teachers are attracted to teaching as a profession with the intent of providing the very best in teaching and learning situations for students. Prospective teachers may influence other university students to consider, seriously, teaching as a profession.

Using the Media as a Recruitment Device

The media consisting of daily and weekly newspapers, internet with its web sites for schools, radio and TV segments involving the local

school district, talks given by teachers and administrators at local organizations, and informal visits, among other ways, may be highly positive in presenting information pertaining to teaching as a profession. Messages conveyed should be

1. informative in that content presented is vital in informing what the role of a teacher might be.
2. accurate in presenting information which truly reflects the duties and responsibilities of a classroom teacher.
3. comprehensive in stating ideals which the teaching profession should emphasize.
4. sequential and ordered in a manner which synthesizes relevant ideas pertaining to optimal learner achievement in the educational arena.
5. meaningful to be understood by the involved constituency.

Self assessment is vital by the presenters to determine if the media can be a successful way for recruitment of quality teachers. As much information as possible needs to accrue about using the media as a recruitment device. Feedback from viewers may give necessary information here.

A school web site may be a good device for recruitment of teachers. A school's vacancies may be listed on the web site. Qualifications desired for each vacancy should be listed. The qualifications should be clear and written in understandable terminology. Funds are generally scarce in most school districts for the school leader to go out into all the world for recruitment purposes. Thus, a school web site may be used to do actual recruitment of quality persons for the teaching profession.

How Should Teacher Tests Be Used for Recruitment?

Much faith is placed upon testing to determine merit such as in student achievement. Testing of teachers has also become vogue. Thus, a single test may be used to assess the new teacher who has applied for a teaching position.Teacher tests may help in ascertaining the knowledge which a teacher has about teaching and learning situations. Thus, to license a teacher for teaching, a test may indicate how proficient the new teacher will be in subject matter knowledge and theory, as well as in teaching students. It is easy then to use a single percentile or score to ascertain the teacher's capabilities for teaching. However, a single percentile/score may tell very little about the prospective teacher. Too many in society confuse a test score with doing well in teaching. Doing well on a test is not teaching, no more than testing a worker at the work place in telling how proficient that worker is. Thus, the tests cannot predict how well a teacher will actually do in

teaching students. In Massachusetts, 59 % of prospective teachers failed the first administration of their state mandated test (Education Week, April 4, 2001). A student may even do well in total university teacher training experiences and yet be held back from teaching due to a low standardized test score. A single test score then is "worth more" than a BSE degree requirements for entering the teaching profession. Weaknesses in using standardized test scores as a sole basis for licensing teachers are the following:

1. it cannot be overly stated that a single test score is not actually teaching students. To prepare teachers for teaching much emphasis must be placed upon actual teaching of students such as in student teaching, interning, and field experiences, among others.

2. test taking is not teaching. However, high quality standardized tests may measure valuable concepts, principles of teaching/learning, knowledge of the psychology of instruction and philosophy of education, grouping of students for instruction, and organization of the curriculum, which teachers need to possess.

3. multiple measures and evaluation devices should be used to determine a person's fitness for teaching students. The act of teaching is indeed a complex act with its many variables.

4. standardized tests used to assess any prospective teacher's qualities for teaching need to be valid. Validity stresses if the test really and truly does measure a teachers competency for teaching. Maybe, the test measures something different such as subject matter knowledge largely or only. Knowledge of subject matter is important, especially for intermediate grade, middle school, and senior high school levels of teaching. No one would deny the value of these teachers being very knowledgeable about subject matter taught. It is unfortunate if erroneous information is being presented to students in the classroom setting. A primary grade teacher, too, needs to be well educated in subject matter, but also needs to be highly proficient, in particular, in working with very young children. Being able to work well with the age level being taught is vital! It takes more than subject matter knowledge to be a good teacher.

5. reliability of testing is very important. How consistently then does a test measure a student's performance be it test/retest, alternate forms, and/or split half reliability? If a test does not measure consistently, it has little value and should be "thrown out and trodden under foot by man" to use a Biblical metaphor.

6. the sunshine law needs to apply to all tests used. In other words, tests used to determine person's future should be scrutinized openly to determine its quality. There are many professional educators who are very capable in analyzing these tests. Thus, the lay public should know what is contained in these tests as test items. Secrecy needs to be avoided in democracy.

7. standardized tests for prospective teachers should be represented by more than multiple choice test items. Generally, multiple choice test items measure the lowest level of cognition which is the recall of information level. There are so many deficiencies here in this line on evaluation. Teachers also need to be able to comprehend knowledge, use knowledge in problem solving, think critically and creatively about knowledge, and assess the worth of information.

8. machine scoring of tests makes it possible to obtain results from large numbers of teachers in a very short time. Computers are wonderful devices, but glitches do occur. The glitches could be devastating for those who "failed' a test with wrongful scoring, but in reality did pass. Pertaining to computer glitches in Minnesota in scoring student tests, Education Week (September 6, 2000) contained the following:

Forty one school system's guidance counselors met one-on -one last month with 538 students who were mistakenly given failing grades, to help seniors and eleventh graders straighten out their post graduate plans, and to help younger students switch around this year's course selections.

As hard as it was to tell 16 seniors that the system had deprived them of diplomas they had earned, lead counselor Philip V. Cognetta said the worst was yet to come for students who were already struggling in school.

"I know of kids who were told they had failed, and their grades just took a nose dive," Mr. Cognetta said. What many of these students didn't know is another blow to their egos-- and this was a false blow.

9. state developed tests may not have been pilot tested in order to take out kinks.The test items then do not have data on validity and reliability. A state may be in a hurry to implement their testing programs and then necessary measurement information is lacking. No test should be used in making major decisions about individuals unless validity and reliability data is in the offing which substantiates its use.

10. multiple information sources should be used in making decisions about a prospective teacher being considered to fill a school teaching vacancy (See Jacobson, 1998).

A Final Statement

From the discussion, it is quite obvious that there are many specifics to look for in a good teacher. A good teacher needs, too, to be flexible in teaching/learning situations. A highly knowledgeable teacher is able to use what has been learned in teacher training and preparation programs within classroom teaching and learning situations. Many schools have or should implement a program of recruitment whereby the prospective teacher actually teaches student in the school being considered for employment. Observers need o realize that there may be

considerable tension on the prospective teacher's part when doing trial teaching. However, observers need to look for the following, among others, when observing actual teaching taking place:

1. how well the person relates to learners in the classroom.
2. how well the person is able to size up learners efficiently in providing for each student in the classroom. Each student needs to learn as much as possible.
3. how well the person emphasizes cognitive, affective, and social development of learners. Rudeness, abruptness, and hostility do not stress student achievement and development.
4. how well the person is able to interact effectively with teachers, support personnel, and the principal in the school setting.
5. how well the person is willing to put forth effort to provide the best implemented lesson plans possible to optimize student progress in the curriculum (See Ediger, 1997-1998, 56-60).

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